



CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF KOREA

조선의 그리스도인 벗들

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"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Romans 8:26-27

CFK Teams Return from May 25–June 22 Visit

A CFK team of 15 people from Australia, Poland, New Zealand, China, Norway, and the United States safely returned after nearly a month of work in the DPRK. Despite all the continuing tensions, the visit was highly productive. We were warmly received and well cared for during the whole of our visit. Projects completed on this trip included: installation of a solar powered, gravity-fed water system at Shinwon #3 TB Rest Home; a water distribution system at North Hwanghae #3 TB Hospital, hydrant outlets, and a tank and water pipe at Pyongyang #3 TB Hospital Pediatric Ward (the system is due for completion in August along with the installation of solar panels.) A broken hand pump was replaced at Haeju #3 TB Rest Home (a larger facility) to restore the clean water supply, and an initial assessment visit was made to South Pyongan Provincial #2 Hepatitis Hospital for potential lab renovation and inclusion in the **HOPE** (hepatitis B treatment) program.

Along with mentoring and training in support of the **HOPE** program at the Pyongyang and Kaesong labs where bi-annual checkups were given to 353 hepatitis B patients, over 6,600 reportable blood tests were completed, 187 new patients were screened, and 130 new patients were started on antiviral therapy. Lastly, a visit was made to North Hamgyong Province to check on the arrival and distribution of 14 greenhouses that were sent to flood-damaged TB and hepatitis care centers in the fall of last year.

The outcome of all this work is that it is deeply affecting many lives collectively and individually on both the North Korean side and among our team. God is opening new pathways for building trust, relationships, and deepening engagements that are yielding measurable and meaningful fruit.

During the first couple of weeks, team members focused on installing clean water systems at care centers and preparing for the **HOPE** clinics by taking blood tests and training lab staff.

What a joy it was to work diligently with people from different communities to bring lasting change to care centers and



A grateful patient with her medicine at Kaesong #2 Hepatitis Hospital

patients, whether through clean water, hepatitis B medicine, or introducing accurate diagnostics that lead to life-saving treatment. Countless interactions with long-time colleagues and people we met on this visit were rich with joy, connection, and meaning. We give praise to God for His work in, among, and through us.



The director of Shinwon #3 TB Rest Home and David Syren test a hydrant

Water Brings Life

Work by our technical team and local colleagues resulted in full completion of solar powered, gravity fed water systems at Shinwon #3 TB Rest Home and North Hwanghae #3 TB Hospital and partial completion of a system at Pyongyang #3 TB Hospital Pediatric Ward. (Please see the section written by Zbyszek Węgrzyn on Page 4.)

These projects bring lasting change to local care centers and give significant opportunities to work side-by-side along with the North Korean people while building trust and relationships. In the words of Shinwon's rest home director, *"The water pressure is like a fire brigade! Now we can quickly complete the new patient ward, grow a lot more food for patients here in our greenhouse and surrounding fields, and expand this facility to care for many more patients! I can't believe how much clean water we have!"* It is hard to put into words the joy that is so often the immediate response once clean water starts pumping, filling the tank, and flowing to the newly installed outlets throughout the facility. The local situation changes overnight and opens up possibilities for other new projects and improvements.



The team that worked together to make the clean water at Shinwon #3 TB Rest Home possible



Roof tile-making machine producing roofing tile

Roofing Tile-Making Machine Training Opens Production

A skilled Chinese technician and consultant with experience in roof tile-making machine maintenance and troubleshooting joined us on this visit. He worked together with local staff and our tri-lingual volunteer (Stone Johnston) over three days to bring the machine back up to production following winter shut-down and to work on adjusting the mix of locally-available raw materials to produce roofing tiles. The machine is now fully functional and staff expect to immediately increase production of high quality roofing tiles. We learned that there is a strong demand for these tiles because they are durable and aesthetically pleasing, resulting in a roof with a 30-50 year lifespan. Our supported care centers currently in the process of being renovated will soon be able to receive new tiles.



Roofing tile after curing production



Patients standing in line waiting to get checked in before seeing a doctor and getting their medication at Kaesong #2 Hepatitis Hospital

New Hepatitis Labs Working Well: Serving as a Model for Replication

In 2016, our focus was primarily on full renovation of the hepatitis labs in both Pyongyang and Kaesong. What a pleasure it was to return and see these labs functioning well and opening new pathways for the rest of the country to follow. The new, fully automated chemistry analyzer enabled us to process over 380 blood samples in one day. Meanwhile, hematology and immunology testing took place in the adjoining rooms resulting in more than 4,000 reportable test results by 7:00 P.M. We were able to complete in one day what it used to take at least five days to complete.

To walk into these beautiful labs and to see the staff calmly going about their work and yielding solid diagnostic results to guide good patient care was wonderful. Lab staff from Kaesong traveled back with us to Pyongyang for more dedicated training with Dr. Marcia Kilsby of Global Care Partners. Later, we learned that Pyongyang #2 Hepatitis Hospital is applying for recognition as the reference hepatitis lab for the DPRK. They want this lab to be a model for the rest of the country. While much training is still needed, it is a great privilege to significantly contribute in building the foundation for hepatitis and clinical care.

Hepatitis B Clinics

From June 8–15, we were joined by team members from our **HOPE** project partner organization, Hepatitis B Free (Australia). We held treatment clinics in both Kaesong and Pyongyang for a total of 540 patients. We were saddened to learn of the deaths of eight more patients who passed away while on treatment. They were in their 40's-50's, except one young man who was only 18. These patients were very sick when they started treatment, but this underscores the need to reach patients earlier in the disease process. Perhaps the medicine gave them a little more time with their families. Gratefully in many other cases, patients who have been on treatment for six months or longer look much healthier and

feel better, and they appear to have new lightness in their steps and countenance.

We occasionally get deeper glimpses into those affected by this disease. One of the NRL staff we've worked alongside for many years has been on Hepatitis B treatment for six months and feels much better. His brother, who also suffers from chronic Hepatitis B, started treatment and feels better as well. A pharmacist at one of our care centers in Kaesong also went into treatment. We also learned that one of our TB rest home directors was sick with hepatitis, and we urged *(continued on Page5)*



Kaesong #2 Hepatitis Hospital staff learn about Hepatitis B diagnostics



Patients study the hepatitis B informational booklets while waiting to get their check-ups

Experiencing More

by Zbyszek Węgrzyn, CFK volunteer from Kraków, Poland

My first time traveling to North Korea was with a travel agency, but this time it was with CFK as a volunteer. The difference between these two visits was huge. Last time, I could not talk with any Koreans besides the guides and translator. On this visit, I could talk with the people I worked with. It was an awesome time. On one project, we had to install solar panels and install a pump into an existing well that CFK supported a few years ago including: water pipes, hydrants, a tank, electric cables, and then connect everything together. The first Saturday, we visited that place and discussed with the director where to dig the trenching for the pipes and electric lines and where to prepare the place for the water tank. The following Monday, we had to start the work. When we were planning the trenches where the pipes should go, I was uncertain if they could do this without any digging machines. They only had shovels, and they were not branded shovels like Friskers but simple ones made from wood sticks and picks.

I could not believe my own eyes two days later. All the digging work had been finished. It was about 250 meters of trenching and 1.0 meter (3 feet) deep in the ground. Men and women of all ages worked arm-in-arm. We installed everything within three days. The director of the clinic and his wife were so happy. Try to imagine having water inside a building for the first time!

That same Saturday we planned the installation, there was a group of Korean workers who were making the walls of a building with concrete. I wanted to help them move the concrete board to the next place. One Korean worker ran to me angrily and took the board from my hand. He did not want me to help them. All three days we worked there, I would say, “good morning” to him in Korean, and he looked at me like I was an enemy, but on the end of the third day, I shook every worker’s hand to say “goodbye,” even his. For the first time he smiled at me, and it touched me deeply; it was the biggest prize for me.

Korean people work so hard, they work from sunrise to sundown and do not complain. The next project was at a hospital. The well, pump, solar panels, and tank had already been installed by the CFK team – we installed pipes and hydrants there. It was a difficult project because of big slopes and not many places for digging. I worked there with one Korean man who was good in technical things; he didn’t know English, and I didn’t know Korean (only a few words). However, he spoke to me in Korean, and I spoke to him in English. We understood each other



Zbyszek Węgrzyn taking a break to learn Korean at Haeju #3 TB Rest Home

in a perfect way. Working with him was a great pleasure.

Our CFK team was amazing: Rob Robinson and his son, David Robinson; David Syren (Heidi Linton’s brother); David Won Kim; and me. I have never worked in such a nice and spiritual work atmosphere. We worked hard and laughed a lot. To live and work together every day for two weeks is not a simple matter. Everyone has his own experience and customs, and sometimes it is difficult not to do something that is, in your opinion, the best way. Nevertheless, each of us knew the reason we were there; we were there in answer to God’s calling and to serve him, our neighbors, and be a light in the darkness. Our obedience is not an option. He touched our hearts, and now our lives will not be the same any more. What about you? Do you answer His calling?

He was touching our Korean friends’ hearts, too. It can be difficult to believe, but when we were eating lunch or dinner together, they showed respect and were hearing our prayers. They were learning that God created the world, that Jesus died instead of us, and that He loves them. I want to thank our Korean friends: the guides and drivers who were with us all the time and worked alongside us. They helped us greatly; they did not have to work with us but did.

Before I went to Korea, many friends asked me if I was afraid to go there. I was not. Now, I see that I experienced something more – no phone calls, no stress, and no worries. I experienced Christian Friends of Korea and Koreans who are lovely people loved by God because Jesus died for them, too. It was a very blessed time for me.

(continued from Page 3) him to show up to the clinic for testing and possible treatment. On the last day of our visit, he did, and he ended up being a good candidate for treatment. We are grateful that this medicine can likely prevent further liver damage and even reverse the progression of his disease. It is a special privilege to help people who we have known for years and worked with in other contexts.

In both March and June, we implemented bar code scanning and electronic patient record keeping that continues to streamline our efforts. Even so, clinical treatment days begin early and end late. After dark, our work is illuminated by solar lanterns. Throughout the day, there is a steady bustle and quiet hum as patients go through registration, receive ultrasounds and fibroscan exams, and talk with the doctors. Patients who were prescribed medicine often stop back by the registration desk with very grateful smiles and warm farewells. Training takes place through clinical mentoring, as our internationally-trained volunteer physicians sit together with local physicians to discuss each case and decide on the best course of treatment. Training also takes place through lectures that we attempt to squeeze in early in the morning or later in the evening after the clinics have finished for the day. There is much to do in very limited time.

Dual record keeping takes place for local physicians to continue care after we leave. Central authorities are eager for this program to expand into new regions, but it is a complex effort requiring significant training and capacity building on every level. Expansion requires careful planning and calibration with available resources, time, and personnel.

We continue to be amazed at God's grace and provision. Thank you for your prayers and partnership in these efforts.

Flood Relief Greenhouses Confirmed in North Hamgyong Province

From June 15–22, a CFK team of two traveled to North Hamgyong Province in the Northeasternmost region to confirm the arrival and distribution of 14 greenhouses sent last fall after the catastrophic floods in late-August. The team flew



Road Foreland examining greens growing in a greenhouse at North Musan #2 Hepatitis Rest Home in North Hamgyong Province

from Pyongyang to Orang and spent three days on very rough mountainous roads to visit five recipient TB and hepatitis care centers in Musan and Hoeryong and a nursery serving children under the age of five (located in Hoeryong). The people here expressed sincere gratitude for the greenhouses, water filters, food, and other emergency supplies provided to them, and they expressed hope that assistance could continue in the future. While it was apparent that a massive rebuilding effort (led by the government last fall) resulted in the reconstruction of many dwellings, there are still many other rebuilding projects in process. The greenhouses have been especially useful to the facilities in the area since much of the surrounding cropland has been ruined because of the flooding. Huge areas previously used for growing food have been completely inundated with boulders, tree stumps, rocks, dirt, and debris several meters thick in places. The scale of devastation is so significant, it is hard to understand how this land can be restored.

Staff at one of the hepatitis care centers noted that they are able to harvest many vegetables from the greenhouse every 20 days or so, including spinach, cabbage, lettuce, and crown daisy. They were also very grateful for the seeds donated by our Norwegian partners, Evangelisk Orientmisjon. Another place noted that they set up their greenhouse in February to



A donor plaque affixed to one of the flood-relief greenhouses

start plants for later transplanting into the fields. The team left our donor list, portable solar Luci lights, Sawyer water filters, and vegetable seeds at each location. We hope for the possibility in the future to continue providing assistance to these difficult access areas that will likely suffer for years to come because of the significant damage caused by floods.

Increased Tensions Challenge Ongoing Work

Over the past year, tensions have risen between the DPRK and her neighbors. A new series of sanctions are having an overall chilling effect on normal business practices while not intending to impact humanitarian activities. We face increasing difficulties purchasing support from domestic and Chinese suppliers and clearing them through Chinese Customs while also managing normal banking and other transactions necessary for ongoing work. Transactions in the past that might normally take a few minutes, now take days or weeks to accomplish, if they go through at all, as vendors require much more paperwork and reassurance as part of the due diligence they feel necessary to confirm that our activities are still allowed under new sanction restrictions.

Further, the more recent detainments of two more US citizens by the North Korean government and the injury Otto Warmbier sustained during his 17 month detainment and his subsequent death cause us great concern. While our teams have always been very well cared for by North Korean colleagues during our working visits, we are sober minded about the uncertainty of the whole situation. As of the date of this writing, legislation is pending that could prohibit Americans from traveling to North Korea as tourists. Yet, it is unclear how this proposed ban might affect humanitarian missions such as ours. Nevertheless, we are grateful to so many in the CFK family who have made their voices heard in Washington, DC to support the continuation of humanitarian work.

Despite all of this, we can clearly see that God is bringing about transformation in many lives and communities as we go about our work. This newsletter shares some of the many



David Syren works with a North Korean colleague at North Hwanghae #3 TB Hospital

miracles we see, as we seek to faithfully live out the calling to love and serve Him among the North Korean people. Now more than ever, we ask for your prayers for the 70 million people who live in both North and South Korea along with their neighbors near and far. Please pray that we will keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, to live out our calling wisely. Please also be in prayer that we will receive the resources needed to continue our work in keeping with his will and purposes.

We also trust our work will be able to continue. Besides continuing our hepatitis B clinics, priority projects in the coming months include: sending renovation materials to several additional facilities; drilling 3-5 more water wells; and sending several replacement greenhouses, walking tractors, and trailers. We also hope to send another multi-passenger/cargo vehicle to help our technical team carry tools, materials, and volunteers to project sites. We are grateful for your partnership with us as we invest in many lives. Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and partnership!



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